

Workers and Peasants.

The Workers' and Peasants' Party since its inception has been misrepresented by its foes and may times misunderstood by its sympathisers, who but for the misunderstanding would have joined its ranks and made it ever more vigorous. The deliberate misrepresentation of its enemies, we need not take into account, because, if we try to meet them on one point they will invent another. But we must look in to what are sympathisers, admirers, and neutral elements have to say and if possible meet them somewhere, without essentially compromising our principles or outlook.

The analysis of their attitude, as presented by Party members who have toured round the country, shows that we have to consider the following points mainly.

Our attitude to (1) the Nationalist Movement as a whole and and the Congress.

Present Labour Leadership.

From the criticism that the Party has levelled against the present congress leadership and its policy, many have inferred without proper justification, that we are following anti-congress ideas or are undermining that institution. When that inference is made, it is forgotten by those who made it, that criticism of the Congress are made by (1) Anti-Congressites and pro-Imperialists (2) the non-Congress Moderate Nationalists (3) The leftists, who want a still furthermore. The utterances of our Party members and the official manifestos it has issued from time to time must make it clear to every one, who is not interested in misrepresenting us, that so far as Congress attitude towards Imperialism goes, we are more or less allied with the Leftists. The Party from its very beginning has stood for complete Independence of Imperialism and its representatives in the A.I.C.C. whole-heartedly supported the Independence Resolution. But our Party still goes further than the Leftists, Independents and Republicans in the Congress. These groups at present are content with the adoption of the principle in the new resolution on our goal but are not prepared to take the reins of the Congress in their hands, on grounds of false respect to old Gods. They are prepared to allow the older groups and veterans of the Congress to seriously shift the movement on not the right lines, simply because the veterans have done services in the past. Our Party is not bound by shackles of tradition. When men have worked for the Nation, we pay them respect for past work but we are not prepared to allow them a premium of dictation on that ground merely. When they are found to be side-tracking issues,

leading the movement from Political to unimportant and non-political issues, we cry "halt" while others are prepared to submit under the illusion, that veterans are always right. So, when the criticism of the present leadership, we do it not because of personal considerations or anti-Congress motives, but because we feel it is not now fit to carry us to action and Independence. Therefore it has been our policy to ally ourselves with the most radical section of the Congress ranks like the Independent and Republican groups so far as the political action of the Swarj movement is concerned. The toll in sacrifices that the Government has taken of the Individual Party members must silence ever the suspicion of our adherence to nothing short of Independence.

An almost correct interpretation of the Party's views on these matters is lucidly put forth by comrade Palme Dutt in his "Modern India" published in Bombay.

When we have done that and put forth our firm conviction that Swarj or Independence is unthinkable without the support of the masses we are at once confronted by very serious, tried and trusted, radical leaders and rank and file workers in the Congress or in other sections of the Nationalist movement, with the statement.

"Let us first fight foreign Imperialism and then think of the class fight between our capitalists and our workers and peasants. Till that time let us not embarrass ~~our~~ capitalists, who are as much anti-Imperialists as any advocate of Independence." That statement is common and therefore requires to be treated more in detail.

The statement reveals an incorrect formulation of the real question and a confused grasp of the real issues. After all ~~how~~ ~~want~~ ~~and~~ for whom is the fight going on and who is going to fight it.

India as a whole is one geographical country and so far as its relation to imperialism is concerned it has to be one against a common enemy. But when it comes to human aspirations of the human beings, known as Indians, it becomes a different matter. It comes to ideas and ideals, to every day life, to the problem of living, housing clothing etc. because just as man does not live by bread alone, he does not live by ideas alone, he lives by bread more than by ideas. Ninety nine and nine tenths of the people have to think in terms of money, bread and living for more time than they can think of mere abstract ideas. For the big mass of human beings known as Indians, whether in cities, villages offices, or any where, the sole criteria of ideas, activities is the material yield that every thing promises them. The measure of judgement of the goodness or badness of a course of life, of an ideal is determined more in terms of what kind of ease in life it would mean. The same measure will apply to the ideal of Swarj.

People live by extracting useful things from Nature, moulding them into useful form that can yield comfort, ease or satisfy some primary want say food, housing clothing etc. Speak of anything, which is not first and foremost concerned with this and let it be grand and imposing and ideal to any length, the majority of people will remain apathetic. Speak of how to get more food from the land to lessen the taxes, reduce debts and it will move that class to action which is mainly suffering in life because of their not having sufficient means to earn living and such a class of beings in the country is 80 per cent of the whole people. Speak of more wages, full employment, shorter ^{hours of} work and you move 95 per cent of the people, because of the things that matter most, of material things, which are the basis of all life and on which is built culture, ideas, power etc. Thus the everyday problem is better life and the men who most suffer are peasants and workers; they form the bulk of the nation and they alone have the will be asked are in a power to fight for it.

So even if it is a question of mere Swaraj i.e. freedom from foreign yoke, the forces which will really fight are the workers and peasants, so long they have been the real forces and in future also they will command the position.

But you cannot make the fight for a thing which does not contain the solution of their most essential need. Their ideas are not abstractions but concrete material reality. The peasants must have lands, less taxation, no debt. The workers must have a sufficient wages, decent housing and living and all the comforts that a middle class intellectuals expects on a decent salary. They are everyday thinking of it, working for it, and in their own way making united efforts to get what they want. When they are oppressed too much their shortest method is rebellion. To make them realise the implications of the Swaraj movement, it must have an ideologue, of their class, if they are to achieve it.

Then when you come to identify Swaraj with their demands, the conflict within the class, within what was known as a one whole Indian mass becomes revealed. It is found then the workers and the peasants as a whole have two masters. The Imperialists and their Indian masters, some of them in the most advanced nationalist ranks. The class interest comes to the front. The workers and peasants unhesitatingly judge both the masters by the same rod and deliver the same blow. Therefore in the most hightened period of the Swaraj movement the workers and peasants took to grind down the police, military, landlords, factory-owners and all in one and the same mill. The process revealed that the Swaraj movement cannot be separated from the class movements, the two are inseparable.

The hesitation of choosing sides comes up before the intellectuals and the owning class nationalists and the cultural

adherents. They would have the big mass of humanity, half clad and half fed to appreciate the great moral idea of the struggle, offer sacrifices, till it is achieved and speak of the sordid things like the land, wages, hours etc. The press which governs ideas, belongs to the ruling class, the key positions of the social and political life belong to the owning class. They influence the intellectuals, who vacillate once their way, once that way. Radical or luke-warm as their position gets better or worsened in social life.

The Capitalist don't hesitate. If it comes to choice between Imperialists and Labor, they side with their bigger masters and class-mates. They would rather not have the over-throw of Imperialism than grant relief from oppression to agriculturalists or more wages to workers. If you leave aside the Government members of all the legislatures all the elected men are Indians and yet majority of them have consistently opposed Peasants and Workers' bills. Their interests have more in common with the imperialists than with the other class. So, when they have found that the poorer class are getting more radical in their material demands, they have abandoned the real organisation of the rank and file fighters and have reverted to more or less constitutional wrangling.

It is plain from what has been said upto now that the fight for Swaraj cannot be diverted of the class conflict' if it is to be really fought by the people, who are the most capable of it and have in the whole history of India done it.

A radical nationalist movement can only be built, if in material terms of everyday it shows unity between the working class demands, their achievement and the achievement of Swaraj. And this cannot be done on mere promise. Because the first instalment of the sincerity of the promise is related directly to present conditions and can be worked out in reality immediately. How can the 25 crores of peasants and five crores of workers believe that Swaraj is better than the present life when they find that its best advocates are their very oppressors and refuse the most minimum needs of life to them?

Therefore, the Workers' and Peasants' Party cannot divest its nationalist activities of their working class character. The two are inseparable. The Congress predominantly belongs to the ^{own} working-class big and small. Therefore, it is that our Party in its role of working class ^{oppressed} ~~appeared~~ ^{oppressed} to best nationalists. And we unhesitatingly choose for the most oppressed, as they are the real nation. At the same time when the Indian oppressors of the Indian masses oppose Imperialism when their interest are threatened, we unhesitatingly lend out support to the anti-Imperialist section and strengthen their hands.

That is why we were most emphatic in the absolute and complete boycott of the Simon Commission.

Thus the only class that is capable of anti imperialist struggle is the exploited class of workers peasants and the lowest ranks of the Petty-bourgeois. This class will not fight for a thing which means Utopia to them, which does not holdout to them definite prospects of a better condition of society. Nor can we do without the active participation of this class. So, the Swaraj agitation cannot be separated from the economic emancipation of the exploited poor. We do not expect the Congress ever to become the champion of this class. Our constant harping on the Congress failure to organise the masses does not mean that we believe the Congress to be capable of it. It is only done to make it radical as far as possible, to eliminate prejudice against the workers demands. That is our answer to the most common question put to us.

Next come the questions of relations to the existing Labor Parties and individual labour leaders. We do not doubt for a moment the sincere desire of any of these groups and individuals to do some good to the workers and peasants. Many of them have been the first to start various labour organisations in the country, when we have to consider and analyse their position, we do not look to their personal motives. We only look to the *ideology*, with which they enter labor field.

And that ideology has the most serious defect, that it is unscientific and therefore necessarily merely humanitarian. By unscientific, we mean, they do not know the social currents that under lie the workers movement, they do not know the very ideology of the worker, whom they wish more to dominate and mould according to their light than according to his class ideas. They leave the fundamentals and run after the minor details. They do not see the contradiction between the workers' interests and their masters' interest. They believe the employers would be angels if they manage to convince them of the workers rights. They believe that all would go if they could just satisfy the employer and just get more wages of a few pias, just one or two windows for the workers' dingy rooms and so on. They have not yet grasped the essence of the movement and that is that the employer cannot go on profiting, if the worker is to go on demanding more and more wages, shorter hours and better life. And when it comes to that, the existing labor parties think more of the employers profits and safety than the workers interests. We differ here.

We know that that economics of capital is such that the employer can go only to a certain length in giving *opportunities* of life to his servants. The employer may be very religious, god-fearing may found hospitals and nurseries for his servants but he must have profits, he must be employer and when competition forces him all, his

goodness gives way to profit hunting. The worker remains a worker, always threatened with dismissal, cuts etc, for the safety of the industry that is profits. There is no reconciliation between the interests of the two.

The dignity of labor, culture, ease, comforts, literature, and intellectual life for the big mass of the toiling people are mercurtopia and false promises, when the worker is a worker and the employer is the owner, the boss.

We ask for a fundamental change in those relations. The whole ~~was~~ become a cooperative of the people, who serve and work. In the words of the resident of the Trade union Congress, society must own the things that produce its bread and living.

This essential difference in ideas leads to difference in methods. We agree with the existing labour-leadership that the immediate need is organisation, one organisation from one industry. But we do not want to harp merely on redress of grievances. The leaders are content to write a letter to an employer, if his manager licks a worker. We want the worker to be so conscious and fearless, as to reply insolence with a fitting reply. While the present leadership's last faith is in the goodness of the system our faith is in the goodness of spirit of the peasants and workers.

Then, many do not want the workers to think of politics, and even if they want, they want them to think of the employers-politics. By all means a worker should have a vote, a seat in the councils and all that. But what is he to legislate for? He must think how the Industry can prosper!! Others say politics is no concern of his, though it is the politician that force on him all the laws, the police, and law courts to help the employers.

With all these fundamental differences, we believe in the need of the movement, that of organising the worker and peasants on the basis of certain reforms. And therefore, we always offer cooperation. We do not go with a spirit to break the organisation, therefore it is that we disallow formation of rival unions; we are not aiming at overthrowing the leaders as such but we do aim at changing the outlook of the present trend of the movement. We know, we cannot immediately transform conditions in a day. Therefore, it is that, immediately ask for more wages, shorter hours for the workers, more land and less taxation for the peasant. So long as these demands are not realised, and so long as the present leadership genuinely wants these to be realised not by conviction of the employers but by the solid organisation of the workers, there is no reason, why they should reject our co-operation or misunderstand us.

We have had differences with many personalities on many occasions in the labor field. The differences mainly centered round the correct reading of the situation and the goal. We have been

misrepresented as advocating General strikes and no compromises, violence and so on at every time and place. But it is gross misrepresentation. When we speak of compromises etc., we make plain to the worker the implication of the struggle, the goal that he is to aim at, and the necessity of sectional strike or compromise or whatever the measures are to be adopted in the particular situation. We are particular about sharpen us the mind of the worker, make him class conscious a still harder fighter and unbeliever in the goodness of a system ^{that} wants to starve him. We make him see that the particular occasions ~~are~~ skirmish in a general campaign. And then with his consent, we determine the issue or its end while today the trend is to make the monetary ^{man} issue as the sole thing and decisions are foisted upon the rank and file and resolutions are put ~~for~~ more for adoption than for discussion. The workers level is not raised. These have been our grounds of differences with other organizations and none others.

The other parties on the contrary have attributed the misdeeds of individuals to our Party as a whole. There might be many, who may go and do something individually without a mandate from the Party, there may be many who may not be our Party men and yet declaring themselves to be ours. How can we or our principles and theories be held liable for personal deviations and lapses. A principle cannot be vilified because its exponent turned sometime a wrong way. When an offensive was anywhere taken against us, we have only retorted. We only warn our friends and sympathisers not to be duped by such misrepresentations and attacks.